June 11, 1993

Dear Citizens Project Readers:

I am portrayed by the media (and Citizens Project as well) as being part of the intolerant, bigoted, hateful, fanatical, extremist religious right. Since I voted for Amendment 2, I am accused of hating homosexuals and I need to be cured of homophobia. I am a prolifer, so I am told that I don't care about anyone that is born. To make matters worse, I have participated in Operation Rescue blockades of abortion clinics, so Planned Parenthood, NOW, and NARAL call me a terrorist.

I view the homosexual lifestyle as being destructive to those involved in it and also destructive to a society that condones such behavior. I am even so condemning that I call it a sin. I would even say that getting AIDS thru homosexual acts is reaping the consequences of doing what is wrong. Surely with these beliefs, the accusation that I hate homosexuals must be true. But this only a partial portrayal of what I stand for and who I am? Please read on to get a more accurate picture of who I am and then decide if the "name-calling" is accurate.

Let's assume that a homosexual gets AIDS from his sexual behavior. In addition, he is discriminated against so that he loses his job, is evicted from his home, and all his family and friends reject him so he is facing AIDS totally alone. I strongly believe that Christians have a responsibility to befriend such a person and provide for his needs, even to the extent of inviting him into their home. As the disease ravages his body, they should do everything they can to comfort him. I ask you - is this love or is this hate?

A family I know invited a woman with a young child into their home. This family had four children and lived in a small three bedroom house. Yet they met this woman's need for housing until she was ready to move out almost a year later. What may be a surprise to many people is that this family was heavily involved in the "terrorist" Operation Rescue organization. Was this "intolerant" Christian family acting in love or in a spirit of hate?

Another family that I know invites ex-prisoners into their home until they straighten out their lives. Another active prolife family has taken on the care of special needs children. Again, I ask is this love or is this hate?

So why are these intolerant and hateful people doing these things? The answer is quite simple - as Christians they are following Christ's command to "love your neighbor as yourself." Even the "intolerance" they exhibit is actually love. To tolerate evil that is destroying individuals and society is not love, but to stand for what is right, if done with pure motives, is love. The tolerant attitude of "I'll do my thing and you can do your thing" is simply selfishness and not having a genuine concern for others. Tolerance in America has reached such warped levels that many people will say, "Abortion is murder, but it should be a woman's choice."

The problem with the "religious right" is not that it speaks out against evil and harmful behavior. To truly love others, this needs to continue. However, there is more to love than proclaiming truth. Although much is done by Christians to meet physical needs, in my opinion, much more could and should be done.

Sincerely,

Steve

Steve Weimar

Citizens Project

Honoring American Liberties in the Pikes Peak Region

August 7, 1993

Mr. Steve Weimar
741 Grey Eagle Circle South
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Dear Mr. Weimar:

First, you have my sincere apologies for not responding promptly to your letter dated July 11th. Sadly, there are too few hours in a day to do all that we would like. Your letter raises a number of important issues, and I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to your remarks.

In your letter you explain how you are portrayed "by the media (and Citizens Project as well) as being part of the intolerant, bigoted, hateful, fanatical, extremist religious right." These are fairly strong labels, and labeling is something I think we take seriously.

To my knowledge, Citizens Project has never characterized supporters of Amendment 2 or individuals who identify themselves as "prolife" by using any of harsher, stereotyping terms you list in your letter. You list no specific examples, and my review of *Freedom Watch* publications to date revealed none of the harsher labels you speak of. If you know of something I may have missed, I'd be grateful if you could bring it to my attention..

You discuss your views on what you term "the homosexual lifestyle," explaining that you see it both as a sin and as "being destructive to those involved..." Holding these views does not make you deserving of "name calling." Name calling seems to discourage dialogue and only heightens tension by reinforcing stereotypes.

I would suggest, however, that your views on homosexuality fall somewhat short of exploring why this issue is so charged with emotion. You seem to understand gays and lesbians as a set of behaviors which are both "destructive" and responsible for AIDS. I think it's critical to remember that there are people under those labels, and that they should not be reduced to a mere sex act any more than heterosexuals. Understand, your views don't make you a hater or a bigot, but there is clearly room for dialogue.

I would not argue the examples you offer of compassion in the name of Christianity. This compassion, however, is not justification for acts of intolerance. Intolerance is not always the

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result of hate. Often times, in my opinion, it's misdirected passion. Being opposed to abortion does not justify intruding on a physician's private life by picketing his home and his family; a tactic utilized more than once by Operation Rescue.
I use the word intolerance carefully. I do not mean to imply that we should abandon all standards and create a free-for-all. Citizens Project also represents certain values; we have standards for right and wrong and place a certain emphasis on "good" activities and "bad" activities. But clearly, it seems to me that there is enough common ground between opposing groups on issues like gay rights and abortion to begin a dialogue process. Picketing private citizens, barring access to clinics, sensationalizing and stereotyping tend to chill the discussion process, and that contributes to a real sense of divisiveness and distrust in our community.

I think we agree on one point: the "religious right" speaks out against evil and harmful behavior. I think I can also reasonably argue that many in this group are attempting legislate against what they deem evil and harmful behavior. Both acts are well within any group's rights, but there should be other voices that question this or any group's standards of "evil" and "harmful" behavior. Contrary to your view, I do not think that all of these groups are acting in love. This is an issue which clearly deserves more discussion.

Let me close by suggesting that your approach--contacting us with your concerns--is the first critical step in better understanding one another. We don't have to agree on every issue to make this community a better place for both of us. We are currently organizing dialogue sessions among different groups and I would like to extend a personal invitation for you to join us. You don't have to commit now, but if you think you would be interested in participating please call me at the office, 520-9899. Even if you don't think you're interested in dialogue sessions at this time, I'd welcome the opportunity to speak with you whenever you have the time. I really do admire your commitment to sharing your point of view with us.

Again, I would like to thank you for writing us with your comments. I find, in the tradition of "celebrating diversity," that I tend to learn more from those with whom I disagree than from those with whom I agree.

Warmest regards,

Mike Shaver
Co-Editor, Freedom Watch